



The City of San Diego

Staff Report

DATE ISSUED: 1/13/2022
TO: City Council
FROM: Homelessness Strategies
SUBJECT: Shelter Crisis Declaration

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Council District(s): Citywide

OVERVIEW:

The City of San Diego (City) previously declared a shelter crisis in October 2017 and again in March 2019. Although the declaration does not expire, the City has historically renewed it every few years, and therefore, this item is to declare a shelter crisis in the City of San Diego in order to address issues of public health, homelessness, and housing.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

Declare a shelter crisis pursuant to Government Code sections 8698 - 8698.4.

DISCUSSION OF ITEM:

In December 2017 the City began operating three Bridge Shelters, which provide safe and sanitary living conditions. In November 2019, the City opened its fourth bridge shelter located at 17th Street/Imperial Avenue in downtown San Diego. On April 1, 2020, the City, in partnership with the County of San Diego, San Diego Housing Commission, Regional Task Force on Homelessness, and local service providers relocated the City's bridge and interim shelters to the San Diego Convention Center as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Convention Center shelter, also known as Operation Shelter to Home, served nearly 5,000 individuals experiencing homelessness and connected over 1,420 persons and 43 families to permanent or other long-term housing. The City has since reactivated its original bridge shelter locations and is actively seeking opportunities to expand capacity in crisis response system, including increasing the number of shelter beds. During a declared shelter crisis, the City may suspend provisions of state and local law prescribing standards of housing, health or safety to the extent strict compliance would prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the shelter crisis. State law further allows the City to adopt reasonable local standards and procedures for the design, site development, and operation of homeless shelters.

The ability for people to have a clean and safe place to sleep, shower, use a restroom, and store their belongings is critical to mitigating the public health risks associated with homelessness, especially during these unprecedented times. Each year, the Regional Task Force on Homelessness conducts a count of

the number of individuals experiencing homelessness throughout the region. Due to COVID-19, the 2021 count only collected the number of sheltered individuals and did not count the number of unsheltered individuals. The report concluded that there were 4,143 sheltered individuals region wide with 2,507 sheltered individuals living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or safe havens within the City of San Diego. The 2020 Point-in-Time Count identified 7,619 individuals experiencing homelessness in the San Diego region. Of that, 4,887 of those individuals lived within City limits, representing 65% of the regional total. The Point-in-Time Count also recorded 2,283 members of the City's homeless population were unsheltered, while 2,604 individuals were sheltered through emergency shelters, safe havens, or transitional housing. Based on the last few Point-in-Time Count results and increasing demand at the Bridge Shelters, there are a significant number of unsheltered persons within the City who still need access to shelter. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic, the recent shigella outbreak and inclement weather pose a health and safety risk to those unable to find shelter. The City currently funds approximately 1,300 emergency shelter beds and is actively seeking to expand capacity.

Interventions and techniques, including outreach, diversion, and prevention, take time and effort. And, when an individual takes advantage of services offered, the City must have adequate shelter with supportive programs to help that person begin the process of rebuilding their life. Previous declarations of shelter crisis, with the most recent being in March 2019, allowed the City to address issues of public health, homelessness, and housing scarcity – issues that cities across the state of California are grappling with. The Bridge Shelters, coupled with emergency shelters, safe havens, transitional housing, and other temporary housing continue to play an important role to the health and safety of the City's most vulnerable residents and the public at large. The City intends to continue its current programs, such as shelters, safe parking, and storage, as well as explore new, innovative opportunities to provide housing stability. Having the ability to be nimble and to create new programs where needs arise is critical to the City's efforts to addressing this crisis. The shelter crisis declaration allows the City to appropriately utilize existing provisions of state law that make it easier to provide shelter in public facilities.

City Strategic Plan Goal(s)/Objective(s):

Goal 2: Work in partnership with all of our communities to achieve safe and livable neighborhoods

Objective 6: Decrease unsheltered homelessness

Fiscal Considerations:

There is no expenditure being approved by this action.

Charter Section 225 Disclosure of Business Interests:

N/A

Environmental Impact:

This activity is not a project pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), as declaring a shelter crisis is an administrative activity of a government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. As such, this activity is not subject to CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3).

Climate Action Plan Implementation:

N/A – Does not have a connection to the CAP

Equal Opportunity Contracting Information (if applicable):

N/A

Previous Council and/or Committee Actions:

The most recent shelter crisis declaration was declared in March 2019.

Key Stakeholders and Community Outreach Efforts:

County of San Diego, San Diego Housing Commission, Regional Task Force on the Homeless, service providers, and other private and public community organizations involved in homelessness.

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Department

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